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**10** Things you must know  
before choosing your Cataract  
**surgeon**

# How

## Should you choose a cataract surgeon?

Most people consider their sight to be their most important sense. Yet, every year thousands of people have surgery on their eyes without having done any research about their eye surgeons. Who performs your cataract surgery is one of the most important decisions you will make in life.

It doesn't need to take a long time to choose your surgeon. The following list of **10 Things You Must Know Before Choosing Your Cataract Surgeon** will tell you how. With this list you can decide on an excellent eye surgeon in less time than many people devote to choosing their next car.

*Currently there is no validated method of grading doctors*

1

**Don't limit your choices to only those doctors in your insurance network.**

Despite what your insurance company's marketing materials may suggest, the main factor in determining who is "in-network" is who is willing to accept that insurance contract. Currently there is no validated method of grading doctors and any insurance company that suggests their network of doctors is the most qualified is disingenuous at best.

2

**Ask those you trust.**

Good sources of information include your internist, optometrist, and friends who have had cataract surgery. Even better sources include the operating room nurses and staff at your local hospital. They are often in surgery with the eye doctor and know who has the "best hands." Nurses are by nature very helpful people and will often be happy to answer your questions. The challenge will be getting past the hospital's automated telephone menu and gaining access to a live operating room nurse.

3

### Research your surgeon's education.

Where did your eye surgeon train? You may not know which training programs are the best, but it is easy enough to check their ratings once you know where your surgeon trained. Two objective resources are U.S. News & World Report's Annual rating of:

#### Medical Schools:

<http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/grad/med/search>

#### Eye Hospitals:

[http://www.usnews.com/directories/hospitals/index\\_html/specialty+repopht](http://www.usnews.com/directories/hospitals/index_html/specialty+repopht)

Don't get too hung up on the ranking order:

*If your surgeon trained at a Top 15 institution, he or she received top-notch education.*

4

### Research your surgeon's State Licensure.

Your surgeon must be licensed to practice medicine in his or her state.

In addition to confirming licensure, many state license websites will also tell you if there is any history of disciplinary or legal action against your surgeon. In California you can look up this information online at:

<http://www.medbd.ca.gov/lookup.html>



5

**Confirm that your surgeon is Board Certified.**

In order to obtain certification an ophthalmologist must successfully pass both a written and oral examination. Additionally, younger ophthalmologists must recertify every ten years – a process that can take up to three years to complete. You can confirm that your surgeon is board certified by checking the website: [www.abop.org](http://www.abop.org) or [www.abms.org](http://www.abms.org)

*Board certification is a type of “seal of approval” for all doctors.*

6

**Visit your surgeon’s Practice Website.**

Assuming the above background check is favorable you can sometimes obtain useful information from your eye surgeon’s website. Although some sites do provide educational materials, keep in mind that the primary goal of most websites is to market the practice. You won’t find anything negative about your doctor there, but it can confirm the positive information you have already obtained and give you some insight into the surgeon’s background and practice philosophy.

7

**Find out what others have experienced.**

Are testimonials available online (doctor ranking sites or practice website)?

Are testimonials available in your surgeon's office for your review? Will your surgeon provide you with the name and phone number of someone who had surgery that you can talk to? It shouldn't be too burdensome for your surgeon to come up with a live person who would be willing to discuss the cataract surgery experience with you.

*Keep in mind that Federal privacy regulations limit the amount of information a surgeon may be able to offer regarding other patients who have had surgery.*

8

**Find out how many cataract surgeries your doctor has performed.**

There is a reason they call it the "practice of medicine." Just like a sports pro, a surgeon's abilities improve with practice and experience. Every surgeon requires a minimum number of "cases" to become proficient. For cataract surgery I think this number is probably around 500. Some would suggest a lower number (*perhaps around 250*) but to be safe I'd recommend you have surgery performed by someone who has done at least 500. How do you find out the number of cataract surgeries your surgeon has done? Ask. If you are uncomfortable asking directly then bring someone with you to the appointment to ask for you. This is a very important question. These are your eyes. You only have two. Get over your hesitation. **Just ask.**

*"How do you find out the number of cataract surgeries your surgeon has performed?" "Ask."*

9

**Meet your Surgeon.**

The above research can give you an idea if your surgeon is qualified to perform your eye surgery. However, you cannot know if this is the person you want working on your eyes until you meet with him or her. In addition to confirming his or her credentials, you need to be comfortable with this person. Trust is an important consideration that cannot be sufficiently developed without meeting your surgeon face-to-face.

*Trust is an important consideration that cannot be sufficiently developed without meeting your surgeon face-to-face.*



# Finally, get a second opinion.

10

Most people wouldn't purchase a car without test driving at least one other car. Why would you limit your choice of surgeon because "he's on my plan" before getting a sense of how comfortable you are with the choice your insurance has made for you? This is a very important decision. Unless you are completely comfortable with your surgeon, get a second opinion. The best surgeons do not mind that you have or are going to get a second opinion. In fact, one quick test of your surgeon's comfort with his or her own ability is to let him or her know that you would like a second opinion. If the surgeon becomes defensive about this then you know the second opinion was a good idea, after all.

*Unless you are completely comfortable with your surgeon, get a second opinion.*

I would, of course, be pleased if you were to consider me as your cataract surgeon (and I'm always happy to give a second opinion even if for whatever reason you are not able to choose me as your surgeon). Call now or request an appointment online and my staff will be happy to set up a time for us to meet.

I hope this advice was helpful to you as you make this very important decision.

**David D. Richardson, M.D.**

Medical Director

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# About Dr. Richardson

After graduating with top honors from the University of Southern California (USC), Dr. Richardson received the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa Scholarship to attend Harvard Medical School. While in medical school, he accepted a research fellowship at the National Institutes of Health to study visual cognition. Dr. Richardson then completed an internal medicine internship at Huntington Memorial Hospital in Pasadena, which was followed by ophthalmology training at LAC+USC/Doheny Eye Institute in Los Angeles—one of the top ophthalmology residencies in the country.

## **Trained in the most Advanced Cataract Surgery Techniques**

Dr. Richardson joined SGVEye in 1999 and became San Gabriel's first ophthalmologist to use such modern technologies as the accommodating Crystalens. He has performed over 2,000 cataract surgeries.

## **A teacher as well as a surgeon**

A highly regarded, accomplished surgeon, Dr. Richardson is also a volunteer faculty member at USC, where he teaches ophthalmology residents how to perform advanced cataract surgery.

Dr. Richardson is licensed to practice medicine in the State of California and is a diplomat of the American Board of Ophthalmology.

## **Education and Training**

- B.S., University of Southern California (USC)
- M.D., Harvard Medical School
- Research Fellowship, National Institutes of Health
- Internship, Huntington Memorial Hospital
- Ophthalmology Residency, LAC+USC Medical Center

## **Faculty Positions**

- Volunteer Faculty, LAC+USC Medical Center

## **Honors and Awards**

- Harvard Linnane Scholar
- Harvard National Scholar
- Hughes National Fellowship
- Magna Cum Laude Graduate
- Phi Beta Kappa Graduate Scholarship
- Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society



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Call or visit us to learn more about our services. We look forward to working with you.

[www.sgveeye.com](http://www.sgveeye.com)

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